

Message Text

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FOLLOWING TELEGRAM FROM WARSAW DATED NOVEMBER 11, 1977 SENT SECSTTE WASHDC INFO MOSCOW, KRAKOW, POZNAN IS REPEATED TO YOU:

QUOTE

CONFIDENTIAL WARSAW 8179

EO 11652GDS
TAGS: PINT PGOV ECON EAGR SHUM PL US UR
SUBJ: POLAND IN MID-AUTUMN, 1977 -- AN ASSESSMENT

1. SUMMARY: IN THIS MESSAGE, WE APPRAISE THE POLISH POPULAR MOOD AND THE POSSIBILITY OF A BREAKDOWN IN CIVIL ORDER AS WINTER NEARS AND THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY WORSENS. WE EXAMINE SOME OF THE APPROACHES TAKEN BY AN INCREASINGLY HARRIED AND BAFFLED LEADERSHIP
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TO CONTAIN THE MOUNTING PRESSURE OF POPULAR DISCONTENT AND CONCLUDE THAT THE US HAS A STAKE IN HELPING THE POLISH PEOPLE GET THROUGH THE WINTER AND SPRING TO THE NEXT HARVEST, AND IN HELPING KEEP A MODERATE REGIME, LIKE THAT HEADED BY EDWARD GIEREK, IN OFFICE. END SUMMARY.

2. MORE AND MORE, WE HEAR FROM OUR POLISH SOURCES THAT THE SUPPLY OF FOOD AND FUEL AND, CONSEQUENTLY, POPULAR MORALE "HAVE NEVER BEEN WORSE". THIS EVALUATION IS NOT TO BE TAKEN LITERALLY, BUT IT DOES APPLY FOR

THE PERIOD OF GIEREK'S LEADERSHIP. LESS MEAT IS
AVAILABLE, AND LINES IN FRONT OF THE SHOPS ARE LONGER,
THAN AT ANY TIME DURING THE PAST SEVEN YEARS (WARSAW 8022).
(MOST VARSOVIANS SAY ONE HAS TO GO BACK AT LEAST FIFTEEN YEARS
TO FIND A COMPARABLY BAD PERIOD.) STRINGENT RATIONING OF
COAL TO HOUSEHOLDERS, AND EFFORTS AND EXHORTATIONS
TO ECONOMIZE ON ELECTRICITY, HAVE AFFECTED THE POPULAR
MOOD LESS THAN THEY MIGHT HAVE, ONLY BECAUSE OCTOBER AND
EARLY NOVEMBER HAVS BEEN MILD AND MOSTLY FAIR. AS THE
DAYS DRAW IN AND THE TEMPERATURE DROPS, TEMPERS WILL
RISE COMMENSURATELY. POLAND IS ENTERING THE THIRD
STRAIGHT WINTER OF SERIOUS MEAT AND FUEL SHORTAGES
AND THIS ONE PROMISES TO BE WORSE THAN THE PRECEDING
TWO.

3. IN WARSAW, THE MOOD IS ONE OF SULLEN PASSIVITY. THERE
ARE GRIPES APLENTY, BUT NOT MANY SIGNS AS YET OF
WILLINGNESS TO TRANSLATE THE GRIPES INTO DEMONSTRATIVE
PROTEST. HOWEVER, THE CAPITAL IS BETTER OFF THEN MOST
OTHER URBAN CENTERS, NOT TO MENTION SMALL TOWNS,
AND WE CAN ONLY GUESS WHETHER OR NOT THE MORE INTENSE
BITTERNESS OUTSIDE WARSAW IS LIKELIER TO FLAME INTO
VIOLENT PROTEST. (THIS MESSAGE IS TOO LONG TO SEND ENCODED
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TO KRAKOW AND POZNAN BY WIRE, SO I AM POUCHING COPIES TO OUR
CONSULS THERE AND ASKING THEM TO COMMENT ON IT.)

4. OVERT MANIFESTATIONS OF RESENTMENT ARISING FROM THE
ECONOMIC DEBACLE ARE ALREADY TAKING PLACE. THE
RECENT STRIKES IN THE SILESIAN COAL MINES, ABOUT WHICH
FOREIGN PRESS REPRESENTATIVES WERE INFORMED BY A
SPOKESMAN FOR THE DISSIDENT MOVEMENT FOR THE DEFENSE
OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN AND THE CITIZEN (RUCH), ARE
WITHOUT DOUBT EXCEPTIONAL ONLY IN THAT THEY HAVE COME
TO THE ATTENTION OF THE WEST. WE CAN BE SURE THAT
INDUSTRIAL ACTIONS OF VARIOUS SORTS--WORKING STRICTLY TO
RULE, SIT-DOWN STRIKES, WALKOUTS BY SHOP CREWS AND OTHER
SMALL UNITS--ARE BEING WIDELY USED TO SUPPLEMENT THE
NORMAL FLOW OF BEETS BY SHOP STEWARDS AND SECRETARIES
OF PARTY PRIMARY ORGANIZATIONS. NO STATISTICS ARE
AVAILABLE, BUT UNAUTHORIZED ABSENCES FROM WORK, MALINGERING,
DRUNKENNESS ON THE JOB, PILFERAGE OF PUBLIC PROPERTY, AND
THE OFFERING AND TAKING OF BRIBES, ARE ALL SAID TO BE SHARPLY
ON THE RISE. IN FACT, IN MAJOR SPEECHES DURING THE PAST MONTH,
BOTH GIEREK AND JAROSZEWICZ OPENLY COMPLAINED ABOUT SUCH
PRACTICES, AMONG NUMEROUS OTHERS (WARSAW 8053).

5. THE BRUTE FACTS OF ECONOMICS HAVE CONSISTENTLY
THWARTED GIEREK'S PLANS OVER THE PAST FOUR YEARS,
AND THE CUMULATIVE EFFECT IS NOW BEING FELT WITH
INCREASING FORCE. TOPPING OFF THE MAJOR SHORTFALLS

IN THE 1977 POLISH--AND SOVIET--GRAIN HARVESTS, THE LATEST BAD NEWS IS THAT THE POTATO CROP, IN THE WORDS OF A SENIOR AGRICULTURE MINISTRY OFFICIAL, IS DISASTROUS (WARSAW8052). THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE SHORTAGES OF BOTH FEED GRAINS AND POTATOES FOR THE RAISING OF LIVESTOCK--ESPECIALLY PIGS--ARE MOMENTOUS. THE SAME AGRICULTURE MINISTRY OFFICIAL DESCRIBED THE SITUATION WITH RESPECT TO SWINE AS EXTREMELY DELICATE AND POTENTIALLY VOLATILE. THE NUMBERS OF PIGS ARE SLOWLY

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BEING BROUGHT BACK TOWARDS THE LEVEL OF 1975, BUT AVOIDANCE OF A REPETITION OF THE EXTRAORDINARY SLAUGHTER OF 1975-76 WILL REQUIRE AN ADEQUATE SUPPLY OF FEEDGRAINS AND OTHER FEEDSTUFFS AT PRICES THE FARMERS CAN AFFORD TO PAY. WE UNDERSTAND THAT OFFICIALS DOWN TO THE VILLAGE LEVEL HAVE ALREADY BEEN INSTRUCTED TO PASS THE WORD TO FARMERS THAT THERE WILL BE NO SHORTAGE OF SWINE FEED AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO IMPORTING WHATEVER IS NECESSARY. BUT TO HOLD THE LINE THIS WINTER

THE REGIME NEEDS OUTSIDE HELP IN ASSURING GRAIN SUPPLIES, AND THIS MEANS INCURRING A STILL GREATER BURDEN ON ITS ALREADY OVERLOADED INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL POSITION.

6. EVEN IF IT SUCCEEDS IN ACCOMPLISHING THE FUNDAMENTAL AIM OF KEEPING MOST OF THE PEOPLE FROM GOING HUNGRY, THE REGIME IS UNLIKELY TO WEATHER THE WINTER WITHOUT POPULAR DISTURBANCES. FRUSTRATION AND DISGRUNTLEMENT ARE TOO GREAT, TEMPERS ARE STRETCHED TOO THIN, AND THE POTENTIAL CAUSES OF SUCH DISTURBANCES ARE NOW TOO MANY, TO PERMIT ANYONE BUT A COCKEYED OPTIMIST TO BELIEVE THEY CAN BE AVOIDED ALTOGETHER. FOR ONE THING, THERE IS AN INCREASING POPULAR SENSE THAT GIerek and Co. SIMPLY HAVE NO SOLUTIONS TO AN ECONOMIC SITUATION THAT IS BECOMING INTOLERABLE. THE RECENT GIerek and Jaroszewicz SPEECHES CAN HAVE DONE LITTLE TO DISPEL SUCH DOUBTS. AS WE HAVE NOTED (WARSAW 8053), BOTH SPEECHES AMOUNTED TO A RECITAL OF PROBLEMS OF ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT WHICH HAVE BECOME ENDEMIC IN

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POLAND, COUPLED WITH PLAINTIVE APPEALS TO THE CITIZENRY FOR SUPPORT IN OVERCOMING THEM, BUT WITH NO STATEMENT OF A PROGRAM FOR DOING SO. THE VAGUE PROMISES THAT THE "ECONOMIC MANEUVER" WOULD BEGIN TO BEAR FRUIT IN A FEW YEARS CAN HARDLY HAVE BEEN REASSURING TO A POPULACE WHOSE RISING EXPECTATIONS OF THE EARLY 1970'S HAVE BEEN SO THOROUGHLY DASHED, AND THE CATALOGUE OF SOCIO-

INDUSTRIAL ILLS AND EFFORTS TO SHIFT THE BLAME TO "CERTAIN VOIVODSHIPS", "SOME ENTERPRISES", AND "SOME MINISTRIES" WILL PROBABLY ONLY REINFORCE THE IMPRESSION THAT THIS LEADERSHIP HAS NO ANSWERS.

7. NO ONE CAN BE BETTER AWARE OF THE RISING DANGER OF POPULAR REACTION THAN GIerek AND HIS TEAM, WHO CAME TO POWER ON THE HEELS OF THE BALTIC PORT WORKERS' RIOTS OF DECEMBER 1970. THAT REALIZATION ACCOUNTS FOR THE RESTRAINT CHARACTERIZING THE REGIME'S CURRENT ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE VARIOUS DISSIDENT GROUPS WHICH, INSPIRITED BY THEIR PERCEPTION OF THE WEAKNESS OF THE COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP, HAVE BEGUN TO ACT SOMEWHAT MORE BOLDLY. (WE SHOULD DIFFERENTIATE HERE BETWEEN THE COMPARATIVELY MORE CAUTIOUS CURRENT BEHAVIOR OF THE KSS (COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL SELF-DEFENSE--FORMERLY THE WORKERS' DEFENSE COMMITTEE, OR KOR) AND THE BOLDER STANCE OF RUCH, WHICH HAS ALSO BEEN ENCOURAGED TOWARDS ACTIVISM BY THE PARTIAL VACUUM LEFT BY THE CHANGE IN APPROACH OF THE KSS. BUT THESE FINER POINTS REQUIRE TREATMENT ELSEWHERE.) HEIGHTENED DISSIDENT ACTIVITY HAS MET WITH MINIMAL REGIME COUNTERACTION, E.G., FINES LEVIED AGAINST RUCH SPOKESMEN FOR PASSING INFORMATION TO RADIO FREE EUROPE VIA WESTERN NEWSMEN, AND THE TEMPORARY DETENTION ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS OF PEOPLE COLLECTING SIGNATURES FOR AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PETITIONS. CLEARLY, GIerek FEELS IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO RAISE THE POLITICAL TEMPERATURE AMONG INTELLECTUALS AND STUDENTS BY ORDERING A REAL CRACKDOWN, INCLUDING

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ARRESTS, AND THUS CREATING NEW DILEMMAS FOR HIMSELF. ON THE CONTRARY, HE CONTINUES TO SEEM DISPOSED TO BE CONSILIATORY WHEREVER HE CAN. A CASE IN POINT IS THIS WEEK'S ISSUANCE OF A PASSPORT TO KSS ACTIVIST JAN-JOZEF LIPSKI TO TRAVEL TO GREAT BRITAIN FOR HEART SURGERY.

8. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, GIerek's OPTIONS ARE NARROW, AND HE APPEARS TO BE LOOKING MOST IMMEDIATELY TO POLITICAL GESTURES OF ONE SORT AND ANOTHER TO HELP HIM KEEP THE LID ON.

9. THE FIRST OF THESE WAS HIS MEETING WITH CARDINAL WYSZYSKI ON OCTOBER 29 (WARSAW 7878). AS ONE WARSAW INTELLECTUAL OF SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC HUE PUT IT BITTERLY, "FIRST COMES ECONOMIC BANKRUPTCY, AND THEN IDEOLOGICAL BANKRUPTCY." IN FACT, GIerek WAS COMPELLED TO ACCEPT THE PRIMATE'S INSISTENT DEMAND FOR OVERT REGIME RECOGNITION THROUGH PRECISELY SUCH A MEETING.

10. THE NEXT WILL BE GIIREK'S MEETING WITH THE

POPE AT THE END OF THIS MONTH. ACCORDING TO PRESENT PLANS, THE PRIMATE WILL BE IN ROME DURING THE MEETING AND WE CAN EXPECT THAT THE POPE WILL HAVE RECEIVED A VERY CAREFUL BRIEFING ON HOW TO HANDLE THE COMMUNIST CHIEF OF THIS MOST DEVOUT OF ALL THE LANDS WHERE THE FIGURE OF THE HOLY FATHER COMMANDS POPULAR RESPECT. (IT IS INTERESTING TO SPECULATE WHETHER GIEREK MIGHT AGREE THAT THE POPE COULD VISIT POLAND. THE POLISH POLITICAL LEADERSHIP COULD REGARD AN ANNOUNCEMENT THAT SUCH A INVITATION HAD BEEN EXTENDED FOR LATE SPRING OR SUMMER OF NEXT YEAR AS AN EFFECTIVE CALMATIVE FOR THE UNEASY WINTER WHICH LIES AHEAD. SUCH A VISIT, LONG AN AMBITION OF THE HOLY CONFIDENTIAL

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SEE AND THE POLISH EPISCOPATE, WOULD, OF COURSE, PRODUCE UNPRECEDENTED SCENES OF MASS FERVOR THROUGHOUT POLAND. THE REGIME MIGHT CALCULATE THAT, THE WINTER ONCE OVER, IT COULD THEN CONSIDER WHETHER IT WAS REALLY NECESSARY TO ENTERTAIN THE VISIT AFTER ALL.

11. THE THIRD SUCH MEETING IS THAT WHICH IS PLANNED WITH PRESIDENT CARTER. THE MERE FACT OF THE PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO WARSAW WOULD BE RENEWED TESTIMONY TO THE SPECIAL CHARACTER OF THE RELATIONSHIP WHICH, MORE THAN ANY OTHER EASTERN EUROPEAN STATE, POLAND HAS WITH THE U.S. REGARDLESS OF WHAT IS OR IS NOT DECIDED OR DISCUSSED AT SUCH A MEETING, THE WIDESPREAD POLISH RUMOR GRAPE-VINE WILL BE LOADED WITH REPORTS ABOUT AMERICAN "HELP" AND "LOANS" AND THE U.S. INTENTION NOT TO LET POLAND GO UNDER. (THIS WILL ALSO BE THE EFFECT, TO A LESSER EXTENT, OF CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT'S VISIT, WHICH HAS JUST BEEN ANNOUNCED FOR LATE NOVEMBER.)

12. EVEN ALL THIS IS PROBABLY NOT ENOUGH TO ENSURE AGAINST POPULAR FLAREUPS, BUT, TAKEN TOGETHER, THE MEETINGS COULD HELP HOLD THEM WITHIN REASONABLE BOUNDS. TWO MORE RESTRAINING FACTORS SHOULD BE MENTIONED.

13. THE FIRST IS THAT THE GIEREK TEAM SEEMS TO HAVE NO BENCH STRENGTH, NO SUBSTITUTES, OR PINCH HITTERS WHO MIGHT BE CALLED INTO THE GAME OR REPLACE THE FLAGGING REGULARS NOW IN THE LINE-UP. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT CHANGES IN THE LEADERSHIP WILL NOT OCCUR. THEY ALMOST SURELY WILL; ONE VERY POPULAR MOVE WOULD BE THE LONG-AWAITED SIDE-LINING OF PREMIER JAROSZEWCZ. BUT THE KEY POINT IS THE ABSENCE OF CANDIDATES ABLE AND WILLING TO CHALLENGE THE FIRST SECRETARY FOR THE TOP SLOT. DESPITE THE GROWING PERCEPTION OF GIEREK AS ALMOST TOTALLY BAFFLED IN HIS EFFORTS TO COPE WITH POLAND'S PROBLEMS, HE IS ALSO WIDELY SEEN AS AN ESSENTIALLY CONFIDENTIAL

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DECENT PERSON, AS COMMUNIST LEADERS GO. IT THUS
SEEMS DOUBTFUL THAT MOST DEMONSTRATORS AGAINST THE
CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS WOULD WANT TO CARRY THINGS
SO FAR AS TO UNSEAT THE FIRST SECRETARY WHEN THERE IS
NOT A CLUE AS TO WHO MIGHT SUCCEED HIM. PROFESSOR JAN SZCZE-
PANSKI SAYS, THAT, AFTER
GIEREK, POLAND WOULD GET HUSAK, NOT DUBCEK. IF IT IS
NOT TRURE, IT IS AT ANY RATE WELL PUT.

14. THE OTHER, AND PROBABLY MOST SIGNIFICANT FACTOR OF ALL, IS
THE DESIRE, EXTENDING ACROSS THE WHOLE SPECTRUM OF POLISH SOCIETY,
TO AVOID CREATING A SITUATION WHICH COULD BRING ABOUT
DIRECT SOVIET INTERVENTION. THIS DESIRE CONTRIBUTES TO
THE PROCESS OF CHURCH-STATE ACCOMMODATION; IT KEEPS THE
DISSIDENTS FROM ACTIVITIES AS PROVOCATIVE AS THEY MIGHT
OTHERWISE BE TEMPTED TO UNDERTAKE. MORE IMPONDERABLE
IS THE EXTENT TO WHICH IT WOULD INHIBIT A CHAIN REACTION
AMONG WORKERS ONCE SOME OF THEM HAD TAKEN TO THE
STREETS. ON BALANCE, WE THINK IT WOULD OPERATE
STRONGLY ENOUGH, EVEN UNDER THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES, TO
PREVENT A TOTAL BREAKDOWN OF THE ORDER OF THIS ADMITTEDLY
VOLATILE SOCIETY.

15. THE PROSPECT, THEREFORE, IS THAT THE
GIEREK LEADERSHIP WILL MANAGE TO MUDDLE THROUGH THE
NEXT MONTHS, BUT THAT IT WILL BE AN ANXIOUS AND UNSETTLED
PERIOD FOR POLAND, FOR THE USSR, FOR THE US, AND FOR
ALL IN EUROPE WHO KNOW HOW GREAT THE PRESSURE IS IN
THE POLISH BOILER. AND, FINALLY, WE CAN NEVER COMPLETELY
RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF A CHAIN REACTION WHICH,
DESPITE EVERYBODY'S BETTER JUDGMENT, MIGHT GET OUT OF HAND
AND REQUIRE THE SOVIETS, COMPLETELY AGAINST THEIR
DESIRERS, TO MOVE IN PHYSICALLY AND SECURE THE KEYSTONE OF THEIR
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CORDON STALINAIRE.

16. CONFRONTED WITH THE POTENTIAL DANGER OF AN EXPLOSION IN
POLAND, IT IS POSSIBLE TO SHRUG AND SAY THAT IT IS A PROBLEM FOR
THE POLISH COMMUNISTS AND THEIR SOVIET OVERLORDS, BUT NOT FOR
THE US. THERE ARE TWO PRINCIPAL OBJECTIONS TO SUCH
A RESPONSE. FIRST, THE 31,500,000 POLES WHO ARE NOT
COMMUNISTS ARE THOSE WHO WOULD DO THE SUFFERING--NOT
THE 2,500,000 POLISH COMMUNISTS, WHO, IN AN EXTREMITY,
COULD SIMPLY GO EAST (ALTHOUGH THE GREAT MAJORITY OF
THEM, BEING "RADISHES" -- RED ON THE OUTSIDE, BUT WHITE
ON THE INSIDE -- WOULD CERTAINLY STIVE TO REMAIN THE
THEIR HOMELAND). MANY OF THOSE 31.5 MILLION ARE THE
RELATIVES OF THE ESTIMATED TEN MILLION AMERICANS OF
POLISH ORIGIN. THIS, IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, MAKES WHAT

HAPPENS IN POLAND A MATTER OF GREAT NATURAL INTEREST
TO THE US GOVERNMENT. SECONDLY, I SUGGEST THAT THE
NEGATIVE EFFECT OF THE UNTHINKABLE--THE KILLING OF NUMBERS OF POLES
BY SOVIET TROOPS--ON US ATTITUDES TOWARDS RELATIONS WITH
THE SOVIET UNION WOULD BE FAR GRAVER AND FAR LONGER
LASTING THAN THAT PRODUCED BY THE WARSAW PACT INVASION
OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN 1968.

17. THIS LEAVES THE QUESTION OF WHAT THE US SHOULD
DO. WE HAVE AN INTEREST IN DOING WHAT WE REASONABLY
CAN TO HELP FORESTALL A FURTHER SERIOUS DETERIORATION
IN POLAND. ANY BREAKDOWN IN PUBLIC ORDER WHICH WOULD
RISK SOVIET INTERVENTION WOULD HAVE REPERCUSSIONS
FAR BEYOND POLAND'S BORDERS. WE SHOULD ALSO TRY TO
ENCOURAGE FURTHER THE MODEST STEPS TAKEN OVER RECENT
YEARS BY GIerek AND HIS ASSOCIATES IN THE DIRECTION
OF A MORE LIBERAL INTERNAL REGIME. IF GIerek CANNOT
MAINTAIN HIMSELF AT THE TOP, WE SHOULD LIKE TO SEE
SOME SIMILARLY MINDED MODERATE LEADER IN CHARGE IN
WARSAW. THE VISIT OF PRESIDENT CARTER WILL SIGNAL THIS
PREFERENCE. BUT POLAND'S IMMEDIATE NEEDS ARE IN THE
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ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL REALM, AND WE SHOULD THUS
PREPARE TO TAKE A NUMBER OF SPECIFIC MEASURES TO HELP THE POLES
SHORE UP THEIR SAGGING ECONOMY. SOME RECOMMENDATIONS, TOGETHER
WITH A MORE DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE POLISH ECONOMY, ARE
THE SUBJECT OF A SUBSEQUENT MESSAGE.
DAVIES UNQUOTE VANCE

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